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A
L E T T E R
TO
FRIENDS
OF
PORT ISAAC.

L. E. T. E. R.

TO

FRIDAY



FOR

A
L E T T E R
TO
F R I E N D S
OF
P O R T I S A A C
IN
C O R N W A L L,
FROM
T H O M A S G W I N,
L A T E O F F A L M O U T H.

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LETTER

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LETTER

*To Friends at Port Isaac and the Parts
adjacent.*

DEAR FRIENDS,

BEING at this time disabled by much pain and weakness, and confined to my chamber, I cannot visit you personally : it therefore became some concern to me, to send you this Epistle and token of true love, with desires for your everlasting well-being.

The Lord, as you know, hath been wonderfully kind unto us, in visiting of us with his day-spring from on high, and calling us to be a peculiar people, and a chosen generation, to shew forth his praise; and as we have been diligent in waiting upon him, he has frequently renewed his visitations unto us, whereby we have known his Divine teaching, "and need not any man to teach us, but as the same anointing teacheth, which is truth, and no lie."

This is indeed a great privilege; and that which we labour and travail for is, that all may become the children of Zion, taught of the Lord, that they may be established in righteousness, and be far from oppression; and this is enjoyed by those who obey his Divine teachings.

ings. They have a familiar converse with him, and are made glad in his presence ; they delight in assembling together for the worshipping of him, and it is a great comfort to them, to approach before him. And although the proud may be counted happy, and they who work wickedness may be set up—yet they that fear the Lord, will take opportunities to speak comfortably one unto another ; and the Lord hearkens, and hears, and has a book of remembrance written for them, and they shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels. And herein is the fellowship and unity of brethren, where the flock of Christ feed together and partake of the pastures of life, and drink of that river, the streams of which make glad the city of God ; and the body edifies itself in

love, being all in a holy subjection to our heavenly head and Lord, Christ Jesus.

But the great enemy of the happiness of mankind, who labours to draw the stars of heaven from their station, endeavours at this day to draw many, who have in some measure believed, from their steadfastness in the truth. Thus some, as in the days of old, having departed from the heavenly union, have gone into the envious ways of Cain, have followed covetousness with Balaam, and perished in the gainfaying of Core. But I am persuaded better things concerning you; however, I was willing to send those few cautions, that you may be found watchful for the visitations of divine grace, and may never be prevailed on by the subtilty of Satan.

First,

First, then, I caution you, that you may watch diligently against the temptations of the world and the cares of this life, which, as they have prevailed, have caused many to become dry and formal, and unacquainted with the springs of divine virtue. Our Saviour cautioned his followers to take heed lest their hearts should be overcome by them ; and he set forth the dismal condition of such, in the parable of that ground which was overgrown with briars and thorns, whereby the seed sown was choked and became unfruitful. Such may frequent meetings a long time and yet receive no benefit : not that there is any thing wanting in the Lord ; but these want the due qualifications that fit us for his divine blessings. Therefore, friends, let us labour to obtain, a spirit more heavenly and less worldly ; and in it

we shall find the Lord to be as near as ever; truth will be as desirable to us as ever it was; and, as a people risen with Christ Jesus, we shall seek those things that are above: our affections will be settled on him, and those graces which he brings into the soul; the want of which has caused many to sit down in barrenness, under an empty profession, where, as the foolish virgins, their lamps have been destitute of the divine oil.

Secondly. Friends, be careful to keep up your assemblies, and to improve the opportunities of worshipping the great God. Let that mind be in you which was in the kingly prophet, who said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up to the house of the Lord:" for that spirit which leads people to
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be careless of meetings, leads out of the love of truth; the services of such become tedious, and it is a hard exercise to them to wait upon God. Whereas the poor in spirit, with those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, will delight to look unto him who feeds them and refreshes them, and who takes a delight in their approaching near unto him.

Thirdly. Be careful to keep up the testimony of truth, and not to flinch from it because of sufferings; for that spirit which is offended with suffering, and looks upon it as grievous and intolerable, has not been duly exercised in looking unto the Lord. If our hearts were guided by the spirit of faith, we should thereby see how blessed they are who are persecuted for righteousness sake, and that their reward is great in Heaven.

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In the primitive times, it is said, they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a far more enduring substance. Let this heavenly inheritance be set before your eyes; that so you may not look upon the loss of goods or loss of liberty, to be such grievous and insupportable exercises, as therefore to let fall any branch of that testimony, Christ has called us to bear. The providence of God has given us great degrees of liberty and ease from the outward persecutor; and there are not many branches of our testimony, for which we are so liable to sufferings as we were some years ago. Let us be thankful to God for this mercy, and be true and faithful unto him; that we may have right to enter with him, and to eat of the hidden manna, and to enjoy "that white stone, in which

which is the new name that no one knoweth but he who receiveth it."

Finally. Brethren, be at peace with each other. Let the love of God abound among you, that the strong may bear the infirmities of the weak, and not seek to please themselves. Let not those who are weak in judgment be strong in conceit; but all holding to the head, from which the whole body, by joints and bands, hath nourishment ministered, grow up together, to serve, to honour, and to praise the great God, who is over all, worthy for ever!

And thus, friends, you will become more and more lively and lovely in the eyes of the Lord; and your fellowship together in the truth, will be like the oil that fell upon
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the head of Aaron; which did not only come down to his beard, but to the very skirts of his garment. So will the mourners be comforted, the weak and feeble ones supported, the careless be cautioned, and the rebellious rebuked; and your neighbours, in attending your meetings, and in the doctrine they hear, will have an ensign held out to them; by which they will be turned to the light within, the holy unction, the law written in the heart and placed in the spirit; and come to the knowledge of God, which is life eternal. Many have been like unto the Athenians, worshipping an unknown God; or like the Samaritans, who, as our Lord told the woman, worshipped they knew not what: but those that come under the direction of the spirit of Truth, they know whom they worship, and what worship he is well pleased with; and that the sacrifices

fices of God, a broken heart and a contrite spirit, he never will despise. And as the apostle told the Athenians, they might feel after the Lord, for he was not far from every one of them—to him I desire to direct and leave you, who leads in the way of righteousness, and in the midst of the path of judgment; he will be a succour to the needy soul, enrich the poor, and strengthen the feeble-minded. In whose sweet love and peace, I salute you, and remain your faithful friend,

And fellow traveller,

THOMAS GWIN.

FALMOUTH, 13th of
2d Month, 1710.

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